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Study on the right to participation of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries in decision-making processes

Note by the Secretariat

At its eleventh session the Permanent Forum appointed Eva Biaudet, a member of the Forum, to undertake a study on the right to participation of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries in decision-making processes, to be submitted to the Forum at its twelfth session. The requested study is hereby transmitted to the Forum.

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Study on the right to participation of indigenous youth in the Nordic countries in decision-making processes[1]

I. Introduction

1. The present study covers Sami youth in Finland, Sweden and Norway, and Inuit (Greenlandic) youth in Greenland. Given the significant number of Greenlandic residents in Denmark,[2] the study also takes into account Greenlandic youth residing in Denmark and how their views on matters of relevance to them are heard.

2. The study provides a review of the three major Sami political institutions (the Sami Parliaments of Finland, Sweden and Norway) as well as the Parliament of Greenland (the Inatsisartut), and examines to what extent those institutions allow for the participation of youth in their decision-making processes. The present study also examines to what extent young indigenous activists feel that they are successful in influencing and setting the political agenda, and what indigenous youth expect from their Parliaments.

3. While the study reviews the Parliaments as models of good practice with regard to youth participation, it also highlights some of the challenges faced by young persons who wish to participate in decision-making processes. Pointing to prospects for future work, the author submits conclusions and recommendations to the four Parliaments on how to promote the inclusion of young people in this important field.

4. The study draws on answers submitted by the Sami Parliaments and the Inatsisartut, communications with members of the Sami Parliaments' youth councils and on-site interviews with young Greenlanders in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, and Copenhagen. Questionnaires developed by indigenous youth were posted in Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Norway and Sweden. By November 2012, 262 young Sami and Greenlanders had answered the questionnaire and their answers, comments and suggestions form an important part of this study.[3]

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* E/C.19/2013/1.

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[2] A fact-sheet prepared by the North Atlantic Group in the Danish Parliament estimates the number of Greenlanders living in Denmark in 2007 at 18,563.

[3] Finland: 63 respondents (with a ratio of 71.4 per cent female respondents to 27.0 per cent male); Sweden: 23 respondents (69.6 per cent female respondents, 30.4 per cent male respondents); Norway: 55 respondents (61.8 per cent female, 38.2 per cent male); Greenland: 27 respondents (65.4 per cent female, 34.6 per cent male); and Denmark: 94 respondents (68.1 per cent female, 31.9 per cent male).

II. Relevant normative framework for securing the right of youth to participation in decision-making

5. The right to participation is a human right, which is fundamental to the exercise of many other rights, and which is based on the concept that an individual should be involved in decision-making processes that affect his or her interests. Everyone should be able to participate in society, to defend his or her interests and to help create a society that also fulfils his or her interests and desires.[4]

6. The right of young persons to be heard and taken seriously constitutes one of the fundamental principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[5] The right to be heard extends to all actions and decisions that affect the likes of young persons — in school, in local communities, in political institutions and at the national political level. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has promoted a broad interpretation of matters affecting the young person, stating that "a wide interpretation of matters affecting the child and children helps to include children in the social processes of their community and society".[6]

7. Under the Convention, the concept of participation[7] emphasizes that the inclusion of youth should not only be an isolated act, but the starting point for a continuing exchange between youth and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all contexts of relevance to young peoples' lives.[6] Article 12 of the Convention requires consistent and ongoing application. Fulfilling the right to participation involves the development of a direct relationship with youth, as opposed to a relationship that is mediated through non-governmental organizations or human rights institutions.[8]

8. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has noted that in most societies around the world, the implementation of a young person's right to express her or his view on a wide range of issues that affect her or him, and to have those views taken into account, continues to be impeded by long-standing practices and attitudes, as well as political and economic barriers.[6]

9. Indeed, the participatory thrust of the Convention on the Rights of the Child often demands considerable change in cultural attitudes towards young people. Appearing to listen to children and youth is relatively unchallenging, but giving due weight to their views requires real change.[8] Article 12 of the Convention requires

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[4] See Icelandic Human Rights Centre/The Right to Participate in Society (http://www.humanrights.is/the-human-rights-project/humanrightscasesandmaterials/humanrightsconceptsideasandfora/substantivehumanrights/therighttoparticipateinsociety/).

[5] Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that children have the right to participate in decision-making in matters that affect them. The Committee on the Rights of the Child identifies article 12 as one of the four general principles of the Convention which not only establishes a right in itself, but should also be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights.

[6] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 12 (2009) concerning the right of the child to be heard (CRC/C/GC/12, para. 27).

[7] Although the term participation does not appear in the text of article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a widespread practice broadly conceptualized as "participation" has emerged in recent years in translating the right embodied in article 12 into practice.

[8] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 5 (2003) concerning general measures of implementation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 4, 42 and 44 (6)) (CRC/GC/2003/5, para.12).

that governments, political institutions and civil society organizations listen to youth and take their views seriously, recognizing the value of their experiences and concerns.

10. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contains no specific provision on youth and their right to participation, but recognizes, in articles 21 (1) and 22 (2), the vulnerability of indigenous youth in a number of areas. The Declaration also contains many references to participation, including free, prior and informed consent and self-determination, which applies to indigenous youth even if they are not specifically mentioned in those articles. The World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, also highlights the importance of youth participation and establishes full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making as one of its priority areas.

III. Survey of the four mechanisms

A. Sami Parliament of Finland: youth council

11. In 2011, the Sami Parliament of Finland established its youth council on an equal footing with the Parliament's other committees. The members of the youth council are appointed on a biannual basis by the Parliament's Assembly. The youth council consists of five members between 18 to 25 years of age. The Assembly also elects five permanent experts (15 to 17 years old at the time of their election) to serve as advisers to the youth council for a term of two years. The Finnish Sami Parliament employs a full time youth secretary who works on matters of concern to youth and serves as the secretary of the youth council.

12. The youth council prepares the Sami Parliament's proposals, initiatives and statements on Sami youth, promotes the rights of Sami youth to their own languages and culture, as well as national and international cooperation among Sami youth, and disseminates information about Sami youth and their rights. The youth council may nominate one of its members to speak at the Sami Parliament's Assembly as well as at the Parliament's Board meetings, allowing for the participation of youth at the highest level of decision-making within the Sami Parliament. Since its establishment, the youth council has been very active, providing statements and opinions on a wide range of topics. On a number of occasions, young Sami have been appointed to represent the Sami Parliament of Finland at international meetings.[9]

13. As identified by the Sami Parliament of Finland, matters of priority to Sami youth include: improving the conditions for traditional Sami livelihoods, the protection of traditional knowledge; and strengthening the rights of Sami who live outside the Sami homeland area.[10] Young Sami have also been very concerned about

[9] The youth council has represented the Sami Parliament of Finland at the Barents Indigenous Peoples Congress in Kirkenes, Norway, in 2012, and at sessions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

[10] According to the Sami Parliament of Finland, 73.5 per cent of Sami children and youth under the age of 18 were living outside the Sami homeland region in 2011. The high number of Sami youth who live outside the homeland region brings new challenges for the provision of education, services and communications in the Sami languages.

the increase in negative attitudes towards Sami people and anti-Sami sentiments in Finland. In general, the youth council has attracted the participation of more girls than boys.

14. The youth council reports that it is consulted in matters of direct relevance to youth, in particular, on matters concerning language and culture. However, members of the youth council indicated that it would be desirable that the Parliament seek input from young people on all matters (not only those considered to be of direct relevance to youth), because in the future Sami youth will be affected by the decisions that are taken by the Sami Parliament now.[11]

15. Most members of the youth council feel that the system in place is good, that their voices are heard and that they can have influence on matters that are important to them. A widespread view is that the members of the Parliament are genuinely interested in what the members of the youth council have to say. Having the right to participate and make statements at the Assembly and the meetings of the Sami Parliament's Board is a source of great pride, as is the fact that members of the youth council represent the Sami Parliament at important international meetings. On the other hand, members of the council are concerned that the Sami general public does not know about the council and its work. To remedy this, it is suggested that more information about the youth council be disseminated in schools both in and outside the Sami homeland region. The members of the council have also requested more funding, as financial constraints have meant that many proposed projects and initiatives could not be realized. The conditions for Sami who live outside the Sami homeland area is a matter that the members of the youth council wish the Sami Parliament would prioritize and focus on.

16. Responses by members of the youth council confirm the observation made by the Sami Parliament: as a general rule, boys participate in youth politics to a lesser extent than girls.[12] There are various reasons given for the lower level of engagement of boys, including traditional livelihood practices (such as reindeer herding), which occupy young Sami men to a greater degree than young Sami women. The mandatory military service for young men, which sometimes lasts for an entire year, also means that boys have less time to engage in politics at a young age.

B. The Sami Parliament of Sweden: youth council

17. Similar to the practice of the Sami Parliament of Finland, the Swedish Sami Parliament has a youth council. The council consists of five members (14 to 30 years of age) appointed by the Sami Parliament for a two-year term. The council serves as an advisory body to the Parliament's board and committees. The mandate of the youth council is to strengthen the influence of Sami youth within the Sami

[11] Extract from responses submitted by members of the youth council of the Sami Parliament of Finland. The desire for a broad interpretation of matters relevant to youth is also echoed in the survey responses collected in all five countries.

[12] Following the elections in 2011, the Sami Parliament of Finland is comprised of 14 men and 7 women. The higher percentage of women in the youth council is not reflected in the current composition of the Sami Parliament. Those figures indicate that while it may seemingly be easier for young women to become politically active, this freedom and influence is reduced when women marry and have children.

Parliament, to encourage Sami youth to engage in politics and to register to vote. The youth council also arranges annual Sami youth conferences.

18. The Sami Parliament of Sweden reports that the youth council is not directly heard by the decision-making bodies. With its 31 members and 8 elected decision-making bodies (accounting altogether for about 45 members), it would be impossible for the five members of the youth council to be active in every one of these bodies. It is up to the youth council to decide how to act in the political environment of the Sami Parliament of Sweden.

19. Unlike the Sami Parliament of Finland, the Swedish Sami Parliament does not employ a youth secretary and there is no one in the Parliament's administration who deals specifically with youth issues. The Parliament reports[13] that political activity among young men and women is seemingly equal, at least in terms of voting figures, which show that the proportion of young men and women among the voters is equal.[14]

20. Members of the youth council of the Sami Parliament report that they are satisfied with the youth council system and are pleased that the political parties in the Sami Parliament are willing to include young people on their polling lists. It is reported, however, that the youth council is underdeveloped and that it has been affected by political unwillingness to provide it with adequate funding. Owing to financial constraints, the youth council has not been able to fulfil its plan of action (approved by the Sami Parliament in 2007). There is further concern over the fact that the council rarely gets called upon to participate in important sessions and meetings of the Parliament and that it is not often asked to provide input concerning political documents or motions that are being considered by the Parliament. On a more positive note, members of the youth council reported that they are pleased that they are invited to attend meetings between the Sami Parliament and State authorities and ministries.

21. The general impression obtained from the members of the youth council is that Sami youth are interested in politics, but that the Sami Parliament is difficult to approach. It is suggested that more accessible information about the Parliament should be disseminated among Sami youth, and that the Parliament make contact with a greater number of young people by arranging seminars on the works of the Sami Parliament, political processes and current issues. Members of the youth council would like to have the opportunity to arrange courses for Sami youth on how to become more politically involved.

22. Considering the participation of young men and women, members of the youth council reported that their impression that it is more difficult to get young men to become active in politics, but that young men accept offers for high-level positions more often than young women. Racism towards the Sami, Sami self-determination, land and water rights and extractive industries operating in Sápmi[15] are listed as

[13] The Parliament reports that in the 2009 elections for the Sami Parliament of Sweden approximately 10 per cent of the voters were under 25 years of age.

[14] Following the elections in 2009, 15 of the 31 members of the Sami Parliament of Sweden were women. In 2008, the ratio was 10 women to 21 men.

[15] Sápmi refers to the territory which the Sami traditionally inhabit. The Sápmi region spans the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland and the Kola peninsula in the Russian Federation.

concerns that occupy Sami youth in Sweden, and as matters of concern that link Sami youth in Sweden, Finland and Norway together.

C. The Sami Parliament of Norway: youth committee

23. In 2003, the Sami Parliament of Norway established a permanent young people's committee (the youth committee) with a mandate to strengthen the influence of young Sami on the policies adopted by the Sami Parliament. The members of the committee are appointed every two years by the Executive Council of the Parliament. The appointments are made based on nominations by the political parties in the Sami Parliament and by Sami youth organizations. The nomination and election of youth are based on the goal of achieving the broadest possible geographical and age-related balance, as well as gender parity. Through the youth committee, the Sami Parliament of Norway maintains contact with Sami youth organizations across the country.

24. The Sami Parliament of Norway reports that there are no guidelines as such for the involvement of the youth committee in all decision-making processes of the Parliament, but that the committee is consulted with relative frequency and asked for input on issues that are being considered by the Parliament. Input from Sami youth has also been considered in the international work of the Sami Parliament of Norway.[16] The youth committee is free to focus on issues that the members find relevant, and it can request meetings with the committees of the Sami Parliament and political groups as desired or required.

25. The Parliament reports that Sami youth may also affect the policies and work of the Sami Parliament through voting in the elections for the Sami Parliament. The youth committee is working actively to encourage more young people to register to vote and to boost the voting figures for young people in the elections for the Sami Parliament. According to the Sami Parliament, young Sami men are less politically involved than young Sami women. A major challenge is to get young men to stand for election to the Sami Parliament,[17] and the Parliament has a Plan of Action for Equal Opportunity 2009-2013 to encourage more young Sami men to take part in politics. Asked what issues they feel they are able to raise and have influence on, the members of the youth committee responded that while they have the scope to exert influence on most matters, they are mostly consulted on matters having to do with language and education. More recently, racism towards the Sami peoples and discrimination against Sami children are also issues that the committee members have been asked to comment on.

26. Pointing to the low voting figures for Sami youth, the youth committee highlighted the fact that many young Sami move away from the Sami heartland at an early age, and that the Sami Parliament's election campaigns do not reach Sami youth living in cities and towns outside the homeland region. The youth committee

[16] For instance, in connection with the preparations for the Global Preparatory Indigenous Peoples' Conference on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, scheduled to take place in Alta, Norway, in June 2013, the youth committee and other Sami youth organizations participated in a pan-Sami meeting and made interventions about the conditions of Sami youth.

[17] The gender ratio of the elected assembly of the Sami Parliament of Norway is 19 women to 20 men. After the last election in 2009, the average age of females in the Sami Parliament was 39 years compared to the average 52 years for males.

has suggested that the Parliament mobilize more young voters by lowering the voting age to 16 years (the current legal voting age being 18).[18]

27. A concern voiced by the members of the youth committee is the recent increase in anti-Sami sentiments, which have been particularly notable in the media. Many young Sami who are active and who raise Sami concerns in public often have to serve as targets of abuse while defending the interests and culture of the Sami peoples. Because of this, many young Sami avoid becoming active in politics and do not want to engage in public debates. Making members of the general public understand and be aware of the challenges that many Sami face is perceived as a difficult task.

28. Asked whether there are any considerable differences in the participation of young Sami men and women, the youth committee reported that Sami boys and girls share the same concerns and priorities, but that few young Sami men run for election in the Sami Parliament. Pointing to the practice of the Sami Parliament of Finland, the youth committee at the Norwegian Sami Parliament has requested the right to speak at the Parliament's plenary sessions, a right that the Parliament's current order of business and rules of procedure do not allow for.

D. The Inatsisartut: Youth Parliament

29. At the Inatsisartut in Greenland there are no formalized structures to incorporate youth into the decision-making process. As far as participating in decision-making at the Inatsisartut goes, young people have the the option of taking part in the activities of the youth organizations of the political parties of Greenland. Spokesmen from the parties occasionally make public statements on issues concerning youth. In addition, "youth parliaments" give young Greenlanders a chance to learn about democratic processes and to witness the workings of the Inatsisartut. As of 2009, four youth parliaments have been arranged on a biannual basis on a wide range of topics.[19] The next youth parliament, scheduled to take place in 2013, will have a thematic focus on language.

30. The youth parliament offers 35 participants (elected on the basis of their personal applications and letters of interest) the chance to meet and discuss a designated theme. The participants are drawn from grades 9 and 10 (14 to 15 years of age) from schools all over Greenland. The purpose of the event is to teach the participants about democracy in practice rather than to make them experts on the given topic. Based on the discussions and statements made during the event, the participants draft and approve a final document that is handed over to the president of the Inatsisartut and to the Premier of the Naalakkersuisut (Government of Greenland). There is a general impression that youth in Greenland do not take

[18] With regard to registering to vote in elections for the Sami Parliament, the youth committee is concerned that the age threshold for registering in the electoral register and voting in the Sami Parliament's elections is too high. For some, registering in the electoral register translates into an active choice to identify oneself as Sami.

[19] The youth parliaments have had a thematic focus on: the constitution (2003); democracy (2005); law and justice (2007); and globalization (2009).

much interest in politics.[20] Girls tend to express a greater interest in participating in politics than boys.[21]

31. In Denmark, young Greenlandic students are represented by the organization Avalak, which has roughly 500 members all over Denmark. Every year the organization appoints a negotiator who travels to Greenland to meet with members of the Inatsisartut and the political parties to discuss matters that relate to the situation of Greenlandic students in Denmark. Prior to departing for Greenland, the negotiator consults with members of Avalak about their concerns, priorities and suggestions on how their living situation could be improved.[22] The Parliament of Greenland does not maintain any ongoing communication with Avalak but representatives of the organization report that they can easily communicate with members of the Parliament and that they maintain a good relationship with the national educational committee. Avalak has been hailed as a very active organization, especially in terms of communicating the concerns of young Greenlandic students in Denmark to the political actors in Greenland.

32. The youth parliament is seen as effective in providing young Greenlanders with insight into how the democratic system works. It is regarded by many as a good way to get young Greenlanders more interested and engaged in politics. For some participants, involvement with the youth parliament becomes the starting point of their political careers. On the other hand, as there is no follow-up to the youth parliaments and it is unclear to what extent (if any) members of the Inatsisartut take the final documents produced by the youth parliaments into account in their decision-making process. While the youth parliament may help young people to learn about democratic processes and to become more active in politics, it does not amount to the level of participation set out in article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[23] In their responses, many young Greenlanders have expressed a wish for a more permanent, consultative structure that would allow for regular input from youth in decision-making in matters that impact children and youth in Greenland.

IV. Matters of concern and priority as identified by Sami and Greenlandic youth

33. On a general note, the concerns raised by Sami respondents in Finland, Sweden and Norway are linked, to some extent, to the policies and regulations that

[20] The quota of applicants for the 2013 Youth Parliament is, one month after the application date was announced, 65 per cent female and 35 per cent male. The Inatsisartut reports that these figures seem to validate the general impression that girls tend to participate in politics to a greater degree than boys.

[21] At the time of writing, only one third of the members of the Inatsisartut are women. This figure does not correspond to the impression that women are more active in politics than men, although young women, as indicated by the Inatsisartut, tend to take more of an interest in politics than young men.

[22] Matters of priority for members of Avalak include economic support for Greenlanders studying in Denmark, the situation of Greenlandic students with families living in Denmark and the living situation in Copenhagen.

[23] In fact, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its general comment No. 5 (2003) confirms that one-off regular events like children's parliaments "can be stimulating and raise general awareness" but that "article 12 requires consistent and ongoing arrangements" (CRC/GC/2003/5, para. 12).

are imposed on the Sami by the respondents' respective countries. For instance, Sami youth in both Finland and Sweden have expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that their Governments have not ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples. This is not brought up for discussion by the respondents on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, as Norway already is a signatory to the convention.

34. Language, especially the need to focus on the Sami languages spoken by smaller Sami groups, which are severely threatened, is raised by Sami respondents in all three countries. Sami youth in Finland, Sweden and Norway also express their desire for more teaching materials, novels and films in all Sami languages. Racism towards the Sami is on the increase and anti-Sami sentiments have been raised by Sami youth in all three countries. Sami respondents across all three borders share frustration over the insufficient teaching of Sami history and culture in national schools, and emphasize that the stereotypical representations of the Sami peoples in schools contribute to the negative attitudes and the hostility of the general population towards the Sami. High suicide rates are reported both by Sami youth in Sweden and by Greenlandic youth in Greenland and Denmark. Greenlandic and Sami youth also share a wish for more meeting places, and the hope that more events and conferences for youth can be arranged, especially in smaller towns and communities.

A. Finland

35. Matters of priority to Sami youth in Finland include: the situation of Sami who live outside the Sami homeland region; the lack of teaching materials and books in Sami; language revitalization (taking into account all three Sami languages spoken in Finland); the protection of traditional livelihoods; and external and internal discrimination. Many respondents wonder why Finland has not ratified ILO Convention No. 169. Respondents expressed their wish for increased cooperation with Sami youth in Sweden, Norway and the Russian Federation and highlighted the need for meeting venues and discussion forums where Sami youth can come together to discuss common concerns and share ideas. One respondent pointed out that most young Sami are interested in Sami issues and Sami politics, but cannot find anyone to talk to and discuss such matters with, and that many young people feel isolated.

36. Concerns have been raised that the school curriculum, and many would like a curriculum that would help Sami culture and languages survive more effectively. It is suggested that Sami autonomy should be extended to cover education policy. In terms of education, many respondents found it disheartening that very little is taught about the Sami in Finnish schools,[24] and that neither Sami youth nor Finnish youth learn about Sami history.

[24] This concern has also been highlighted by the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Committee on the rights of indigenous peoples, who, in his 2011 report on the situation of the Sami people in the Sápmi region of Norway, Sweden and Finland, reported that the current primary school curriculum fails to adequately reflect the diversity of the Nordic countries' populations (A/HRC/18/35/Add.2, para. 71). In this regard, the Special Rapporteur recommended that "the States and the Sami parliaments should cooperate to develop and implement measures to increase awareness about the Sami people within the media and the public at large. Such awareness should be promoted, inter alia, through primary, secondary and university school curricula." (ibid., para. 89).

37. Some perceive the Sami Parliament as "too closed", and reported that the circles of Sami politics are very small. One respondent stated: "I am not so brave in my opinions, and sometimes I feel that I give the wrong comments and have the wrong opinions and that this irritates the older decision makers and people close to me … I often feel pressured to have certain kinds of opinions. Sometimes I fear to tell people what I actually think." Many respondents indicated that they did not know what the Parliament is or what people do there, and that the Parliament should become more "people-friendly" by informing young people about the everyday happenings in the Parliament. Members of the Parliament could host meetings for young people and inform them about their work. A general comment about the mandate of the Sami Parliament of Finland is that, considering peoples' expectations on the Sami Parliament and the duties it has, its power to influence and affect decisions on the national level seems inexcusably narrow.

B. Sweden

38. Areas of concern to Sami youth on the Swedish side of Sápmi include land and water rights, the future of reindeer husbandry, the high rates of suicide and Sweden's failure to ratify ILO Convention No. 169. Sami youth in Sweden are also concerned about the lack of education and teaching about the Sami in national schools. More cooperation with Sami youth in other parts of Sápmi is desired.

39. Language revitalization, taking into account the smaller Sami languages, which are in grave danger of becoming extinct, is a reoccurring topic. Some respondents reported that they are ashamed about the poor level of Sami language instruction that Swedish schools offer Sami children and youth. To secure a future for the Sami languages, respondents suggested that the Sami Parliament of Sweden encourage more young people to learn Sami by providing scholarships and economic support for students who wish to learn a Sami language.

40. Reindeer husbandry was brought up for discussion by a number of respondents, many of whom view the future of reindeer husbandry as a prime concern and call on the Sami Parliament to actively work to secure opportunities for young Sami to engage in reindeer husbandry. The policy of the Swedish State which imposes regulations on reindeer herders, is also of concern. One respondent wrote that, "if I was the President of the Swedish Sami Parliament I would work for a new reindeer husbandry act, written from a Sami point of view".

41. Some respondents, however, argued that the Sami Parliament places too much focus on reindeer husbandry and fails to see the diversity within the Sami community. Illustrating this argument, one respondent wrote: "In Swedish Sami politics there is a lot of focus on reindeer husbandry. Reindeer husbandry is important, but I think that the Swedish Sami Parliament needs to work more for all members of our society."

42. Concurring with the youth council, respondents suggested that more accessible and attractive information about the Sami Parliament would encourage more young people to become interested and politically active in politics. The youth council could be more visible among Sami youth, and could increase cooperation with other organizations in Sweden and across its borders. A number of respondents also suggested that more conferences and courses on how to become more politically engaged could be arranged.

C. Norway

43. Areas of concern and priority for Sami youth on the Norwegian side include: securing a future for the Sami languages;[25] the need to teach both Sami and non-Sami youth about the Sami languages, history and culture; Sami youth living outside the Sami heartland; and racism and discrimination towards the Sami. As in Finland and Sweden, Sami youth in Norway report that Sami languages and Sami traditions need to be strengthened, and that more efforts should be made to revitalize and secure a future for all Sami languages. Many responses revealed that young Sami worry that the Sami languages are used only for bureaucratic documents and texts, and many wish that more focus could be placed on the importance of Sami languages as living and spoken languages. In light of this, many respondents expressed a wish for more films dubbed in Sami, for good-quality Sami programmes for television[26] and for bestselling books translated to Sami. Some respondents thought that more funding for, and promotion of, Sami contemporary cultural expressions was needed.

44. As is the case with Sami youth in Finland and Sweden, Sami youth in Norway call on their Sami Parliament to provide teaching about the Sami in Norwegian schools. There is a good deal of frustration over the fact that the Norwegian general public knows very little about Sami history, culture and living conditions. History books should include a Sami perspective, as well as thorny subjects such as the Norwegianization[27] process and how it has affected the Sami. As in Finland and Sweden, Sami youth in Norway are concerned about discrimination and harassment of the Sami, and wish that their Parliament would focus more on combating racism towards the Sami.

45. Many respondents wrote that Sami politics and the work of the Sami Parliament place too great a focus on extractive industries, fisheries and reindeer husbandry. There is a general suggestion that the Sami Parliament should focus more on the everyday lives of young Sami by providing more funding for youth organizations who arrange happenings and events where Sami youth can meet.[28]

46. Respondents stressed that young people are not disinterested in politics but that they are disengaged because they do not know how to become politically active. The Sami Parliament and the youth committee could provide courses, training, conferences and workshops on the Sami Parliament and current issues to attract Sami youth and interest them in politics. Many suggested that the Parliament should offer educational tours to school classes and to young people who want to learn

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[25] Securing a future for all Sami languages could, in the view of many respondents, be done by offering better possibilities to study Sami and by increasing the budget for education and teaching materials in Sami. There is also a need for more Sami teachers and language teaching for both youth and adults in all parts of the country.

[26] Some respondents expressed their wish for Disney films and Moomin movies in Sami, and that "Sami children's programmes in all Sami languages should be shown on television every day."

[27] The Norwegianization process refers to the Norwegian State's efforts to assimilate the Sami and make them Norwegian by forcing them to discontinue using their languages and changing their values of their culture and national identity. Those efforts were long-lasting and extensive. Similar efforts were made by the Governments of Finland and Sweden.

[28] Suggestions include more concerts, plays, sport events and workshops where young Sami can meet. One respondent reported that if she could be the president of the Sami Parliament of Norway for one day, she would arrange a Sami fashion week in the town of Kautokeino.

more about the Parliament and that courses on politics be introduced in schools at an early stage.

D. Greenland and Denmark

47. Matters of concern to Greenlandic youth include: the low standards of the educational system in Greenland; social problems affecting children and youth; the lack of facilities for recreational activities; and the low level of participation on the part of youth in decision-making processes. Serious concern is expressed over the state of Greenland's schools and the standards of the education. Run-down facilities, old-fashioned school books and unqualified teachers are identified as serious problems that cause many young Greenlanders to drop out of school.[29]

48. Young Greenlanders call for more courses in English and Danish, although some respondents stated that they would like to learn less Danish. The need for more fluency in foreign languages is linked to the fact that Greenland is becoming an actor on the global stage and the corresponding desire of young Greenlanders' to communicate with the rest of the world. Increased fluency in English and Danish is also regarded as a necessity, as there are very few teaching materials available in Greenlandic.

49. In light of the high numbers of young Greenlanders who move to Denmark to study, many respondents suggested that there should more opportunities to obtain higher education in Greenland so that not everyone should have to move to Denmark get a good education. Courses in dance, theatre, music, environmental studies were included on the wish-list of many of the respondents. In addition, it should be made easier to study in Nordic countries other than Denmark.

50. The high numbers of children and youth affected by social problems in Greenland is a cause for concern. Many, even the youngest respondents, are aware of the social problems affecting children and youth to an alarming extent. Concerns were expressed by many children whose parents struggle with substance abuse problems. Young Greenlanders also want immediate action to combat the high rates of suicide and request that intervention programmes and support initiatives be offered to the many children and youth who need assistance to get their lives back on track.

51. The lack of activity centres and meeting places for youth is a reoccurring topic. Frustration was expressed over the fact that there are no sport facilities or meeting places for youth in many towns, and that young people who live in small villages and poor municipalities do not get the same opportunities as those living in the capital city, Nuuk. Many regard the lack of youth centres and sport facilities as a factor that contributes to the magnitude of drug and alcohol abuse among youth, as young people in many of the smaller communities feel that there is nothing for them to do. Greenlanders in both Greenland and Denmark emphasized the dire need for youth centres, sport facilities and other meeting places for young Greenlanders in their homeland.

[29] Greenland's spokesperson for children reports that as many as one third of Greenlandic youth do not finish their secondary education.

52. The respondents highlight that Greenlandic children and youth in general do not know much about basic rights[30] and that more information, and easily accessible information, about the rights of children and youth should be made public and disseminated in Greenland. As for youth and participation in decision-making, an overwhelming majority of the respondents asserted their desire to have a more systematic contact to the politicians and authorities and the need for a youth council or youth parliament as active as the Inatsisartut.

53. Asked to provide feedback to the Inatsisartut on how to better engage youth in their work and decision-making processes, young Greenlanders suggested that the Parliament take a more modern approach to reaching young people, for instance through the use of Facebook, smartphone applications and Internet forums.[31] The establishment of a more active youth parliament that would visit schools across the country to inform young Greenlanders about its existence and its work is also recommended. Schools (both primary and secondary schools) should take a more active role in teaching young Greenlanders about democracy and politics through the organization of thematic weeks and events and student elections, the establishment of youth forums and the hosting of visits from politicians.

54. In their responses, Greenlanders in Denmark also raised the subject of the high cost of airfares, both for travelling to Greenland and within Greenland, as a result of which, many Greenlanders in Denmark cannot afford to travel home to Greenland more than once a year. The experience of homesickness, and the unaffordable cost of going home on a regular basis, has caused some of the respondents to discontinue their studies in Denmark.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

55. The Sami Parliaments of Finland, Sweden and Norway include youth in their decision-making process through youth councils (the Sami Parliaments of Finland and Sweden) and a youth committee (the Sami Parliament of Norway), which are consulted in the course of their deliberations on matters that concern youth. The status of the councils and the committee and the extent of their rights and duties vary from Parliament to Parliament. The Inatsisartut does not have any formalized structures for incorporating youth in its decision-making, but arranges a youth parliament on a biannual basis. All four political institutions report that young men are seemingly less interested and/or active in politics and participation in decision-making processes. Members of the youth councils at the Sami Parliaments in Finland and Sweden and the youth committee at the Sami Parliament of Norway

[30] A study on children's right to participation in the Nordic countries, conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Denmark in 2009-2010, shows that children in Greenland have less knowledge about their rights than children in the other Nordic countries. In the responses to the questionnaire collected for the present study, young Greenlanders emphasized that children and youth in Greenland need to be better informed about their basic rights, including the right to protection from violence and abuse.

[31] The upcoming youth parliament, scheduled to take place in 2013, has used social networks and apps to reach out to and engage young people wishing to participate.

all report that, overall, they are pleased with the system in place, but, as this study also indicates, there is room for improvement.

56. Responses from Greenland reveal that the youth parliament is perceived as a good way to get more young people interested in politics, but that it should not be considered as a good mechanism to incorporate youth in the decision-making processes of the Inatsisartut. An overwhelming majority of the young Greenlanders interviewed for the study asserted their desire to have a more systematic contact to the politicians and authorities, and the need for a youth council or youth parliament as active as the Inatsisartut.

57. In response to the survey questionnaire, Sami respondents in Finland, Sweden and Norway shared their concerns over the future of the Sami languages, especially the languages that are spoken by numerically small groups of Sami, which are severely threatened. A perceived increase in anti-Sami sentiments was raised by Sami youth in all three countries. Sami respondents across the borders also shared frustration over the insufficient teaching of Sami history and culture in national schools, and stressed that stereotypical presentations of the Sami in schools contributed to the negative attitudes and hostility towards the Sami on the part of the general public. Greenlandic respondents both in Greenland and Denmark, expressed their concern over the low standards of the educational system in Greenland, the magnitude of social problems affecting children and youth and the almost complete lack of youth centres in the smaller towns and communities in Greenland.

B. Recommendations

The Sami Parliaments

58. Following the practice of the Sami Parliament of Finland, the Sami Parliaments in Sweden and Norway might wish to consider granting the members of their youth council and youth committee the right to speak at the plenary sessions of Parliament.

59. The Sami Parliament of Sweden could also consider measures to increase the participation of Sami youth in its activities by working on matters of concern to youth and assisting the youth councils in their work. In addition, it might also be possible for the Parliament, in cooperation with its youth council, to find resources and ways to ensure the implementation of the youth council plan of action (approved by the Sami Parliament in 2007).

60. Following suggestions made by Sami respondents in Finland, Sweden and Norway, all three Sami Parliaments may wish to consider organizing activities to promote the work of the Parliaments, such as offering, and actively advertising, educational tours of the Parliaments for school classes and for young people who are interested in the daily work of the Parliaments.

The Inatsisartut

61. To ensure the participation of youth, the Inatsisartut may wish to consider the establishment of a permanent, consultative mechanism that would allow for regular input from youth in decision-making processes on matters that impact children and youth in Greenland. The establishment of geographical balance, taking into account

the high number of young Greenlanders living in Denmark, age-balance and gender parity could form part of this structure.

62. Within smaller towns and communities in Greenland, youth would benefit by having access to youth centres and recreational activity centres offering recreational activities.

63. Young people would also benefit by having their views reflected in the ongoing work of drafting the first Greenlandic constitution.

64. Based on previous studies and communications with young Greenlanders in Greenland and Denmark, it is recommended that political action be taken to ensure that children and youth are provided with more information about their rights, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Governments of Finland, Sweden and Norway

65. Sharing the concerns of an overwhelming majority of Sami respondents in Finland, Sweden and Norway, and considering the increase in anti-Sami sentiments in all three counties, the Governments of Finland, Sweden and Norway need to revise their school curriculums and ensure that they have sufficient and up-to-date information about the Sami and their culture, history and languages.

66. In line with the above, the three Governments should organize public campaigns to promote the value and the richness of the Sami culture among the general public.

The youth councils and the youth committee of the Sami Parliaments

67. Conferences, seminars, workshops and other activities could also be arranged in the smaller towns and municipalities in Sápmi.

68. Considering that all four political institutions have indicated that young men are less interested and/or active in politics and participation in decision-making processes, the youth councils and the youth committee could develop strategies aimed at engaging young Sami men in their work and in the political processes of the Sami Parliaments, and support young women in pursuing their political engagement as adults in decision-making within the Sami Parliaments.